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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to shift the focus of research away from problems faced by administrators making reduction in force or reassignment/rank reduction policies to a consideration of the experiences of those affected by such policies. Following descriptions of the study's open-ended ethnographic interviewing technique, the criteria for selecting interviewees, and the means of data analysis, the context and demographics of an urban, midwestern school system are presented. The latter section includes information on declining enrollment and reduction in force, the racial and gender composition of the staff reduction pool (1981-1984), biographical sketches of the seven teachers interviewed, and a description of the middle school setting providing the backdrop for all the interviews. The following section on the study's findings makes up the bulk of the paper and explores interview responses on five themes that emerged as consistent areas of concern for all interviewees: (1) career building process, (2) interim perspective after being reassigned, (3) problems encountered by reassigned teachers, (4) coping strategies, and (5) perceived benefits of nonclassroom experience. The paper concludes with a synthesis of interview responses on each of these five themes. (JBM)

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# REASSIGNMENT TO THE CLASSROOM: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON RANK REDUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

" ... Teachers wanting to climb the administrative ladder in the "Greenville" Public Schools will find a few rungs missing next year. The school's administrative cadet program, which prepares interested and qualified teachers for jobs as principals and assistant principals, is being cut back because of a shortage of money ... Money will be saved by returning some of those cadets to teaching ... "

A midwestern city newspaper

May 5, 1983

As public school systems across the nation attempt to cope with severe cutbacks in public funding, press releases such as this one have become more and more commonplace. The lingering economic recession has caused local school boards to drastically tighten their budgetary belts in an attempt to adapt to the reality of the situation. After special programs, curriculum materials, and auxiliary personnel have been reduced to subsistence levels, further budgetary cuts begin to affect certified school personnel. As Stanley (1979) pointed out in an address to the National School Boards Association,

> Once a school system's budget is pared to the bone, including consideration of lower salary increases, program cuts, and school closing, RIF (reduction in force) is usually unavoidable. This becomes 'bullet biting' time, and the unpleasant task of boards is deciding who is to be reduced in rank, displaced, laid off, or separated (p.4).

Since certified personnel make up 80-90% of school board budgets, they become the unavoidable target for reduction. Seniority is most often the criteria used in determining who will be affected by staff reductions. "Seniority, long viewed as the most impartial, objective factor for determining RIF is cherished dogmatically by most teacher associations,"

(Stanley, 1979, p.7). As a result of the seniority system, senior administrators are reassigned to "lower" level administrative posts, and junior administrators are terminated, or if they have enough seniority with the system, they may return to the classroom, thereby displacing teachers with little or no seniority.

Two basic policy decisions can be identified as having a major impact on certified school personnel as a result of budgetary decreases: 1) retrenchment or reduction in force (RIF), which amounts to the termination of employment, and 2) reassignment and/or reduction in rank, which is retention, but to a different or lower rank within the system. This study will focus on the impact of the latter of these policy decisions.

School boards confronted with a need for reassignment and rank reduction generally focus their efforts on how to "manage the situation". This top-down strategy focuses on the well-being of the system, leaving the reassigned/rank reduced individuals to their own resources in adapting. Reassignment to a new position has a great impact on the personal and professional lives of these individuals, and consequentially an impact upon the school system and the children it serves. In order to deal with the resulting consequences of reassignment/rank reduction policies implemented by school boards, this study seeks to understand the new life-world of individuals affected by such policies.

The literature pertinent to retrenchment, reduction in force and reassignment, tends to focus upon designing and implementing contingency plans when, and if, a university or school board faces severe budgetary restraint (Biescke, 1978; Cherry, 1978; Neill, 1978; and Stanley, 1979). These studies are often "how to" manuals proposing ways of preparing staffs and communities for reduction in force, or they are concerned with pitfalls to be avoided in

the implementation stages.

Clearly the literature reflects concern for the problems faced by the administrators making RIF or reassignment/rank reduction policies, but it fails to address the specific concerns of those directly affected by these policies. Cherry (1978) refers to this void in the literature, but fails to call for direct investigation into the impact of such policies on affected personnel.

> Administrators have undoubtedly made drastic cuts and have supervised the closing of schools, but a casual investigation of the literature reveals very few useful discussions of the personal torments and insights gained from such an experience. It is as if the task is simply too awful to allow reflection or generalizing (p.374).

It therefore may be necessary to shift the focus of research from examination of administrative experiences, to a consideration of how these economically-induced policies of reassignment and rank reduction have influenced the lives, job performances, and careers of personnel affected by such policies. Careers and career-related phenomena have been studied from "objective" and "subjective" perspectives (Scholl, 1983, p. 86). From the objective career perspective, "the career is viewed as a structural feature of an organization." The research on implementation of reassignment/rank reduction policies cited above might be described as taking this "objective" perspective. The subjective career perspective, "deals with the series of work-related experiences and attitudes that span an individual's working life" (Scholl, 1983, p. 86). This research takes the subjective career perspective and is based on the assumption that the circumstances encountered by reassigned and rank reduced teachers are a composite of influences from their previous experiences, and projections for the futures of their careers. All of these factors influence their attitudes toward their current job assignments and performances. In Schutz's view "the meaning of my action

consists not only in the experiences of consciousness I have while the action is in progress, but also in those future experiences which are my intended actions, and in those past experience which are my completed actions" (1967, p. 39).

The problem to be explored here is one that has not been directly addressed in the educational literature. How do these reassigned and rank reduced teachers view and cope with their new classroom assignment? This study investigates how these teachers "make sense" of their new classroom setting, how they perceive the events leading to their reassignment and rank reduction, how they meet and cope with the challenges of their new environment, and how they envision their future careers. This study explores in a limited way how this phenomena has affected the lives of seven middle school teachers after having spent a year in their new environment.

## METHODOLOGY

In studying the reassignment/rank reduction phenomena an ethnographic interviewing technique was employed in order to understand the phenomena from the point of view of those currently having this experience. Loosely structured open-ended interviews were conducted by a two person team, with both researchers taking part in each interviewing session. This format was selected because it stresses the interviewee's definition of the situation; encouraging the interviewee to structure the account of the situation; and letting the interviewee introduce to a considerable extent his/her notions of what he/she regards as relevant, instead of relying upon the investigator's notion of relevance, (Dexter, 1970, p. 5).

The interviewers approximated an oral history approach by asking the respondents open-ended questions from four basic categories: 1) What was the

nature of their previous teaching and non-teaching experiences within the school system? 2) How did they perceive the events leading up to their present assignment? 3) What is their present assignment like? and 4) What do they see as their career future? These questions attempted to raise a very general issue without providing a special structure for the respondent's reply. Because the reassignment/rank reduction issue is complex, and the respondents know more about the phenomenon than the researchers, the respondent assumed the role of the "teacher" and the researchers assumed the role of the "learners". It was believed that the open-ended questioning format of the interviews would allow the respondent "the opportunity to answer in his own terms and to respond from or create his own frame of reference" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p.177).

Subjects The subjects for this study were former non-classroom certified school personnel who had been reassigned and rank reduced to classroom teachers. The study focuses on the reassignment and rank reduction phenomenon as manifested at the middle school level in an urban, midwestern school system. The personnel office of the school system provided the names of people who met the following criteria: Each potential interviewee should (a) have served in a non-classroom position with the school system for at least one year prior to the study and (b) be currently assigned to regular classroom teaching duties at the middle school level. Because of the nature of the categories used by the personnel office for classifying reassigned teachers, the selection of the seven potential interviewees greatly depended on the personnel director's first-hand knowledge of such qualifying personnel. As it turned out the interviewees represented three areas: 1) administrative or quasi-administrative central office staff, 2) cadet principals, and 3) teachers on special assignment (i.e. home/school/community agents and pupil/

community agents).

Data Analysis The first step in analysis of data was the development of preliminary coding categories based on the open-ended questions used in the interviews. After completing each interview the researchers debriefed the experience and compiled notes on the debriefing session.

After the audio tapes of the interview were transcribed, each researcher independently identified and coded elements of the interview into categories that he saw emerging from the data. The researchers then met to share their findings. At this time the audio tapes were listened to by both researchers, and the emergent categories discussed.

As new data from other interviews was added, the comparison process expanded beyond intra-category comparison, to comparison between new data and the emergent themes. This resulted in revised themes that better reflected the phenomenon as represented across all interviews. The goal was to develop categories and themes that were internally homogeneous and externally heterogeneous, with as little data unaccounted for as possible.

The final step in analysis of data was testing the intersubjectiveness of the interpretations. This was accomplished in three ways. The first test was a member check. Early drafts of the paper, along with the researchers' interpretations, were given to the respondents. Respondents were asked to comment on the plausibility and validity of the researchers' interpretations. A second means of testing the intersubjectivity of the interpretations was through a process of triangulation. By working independently and then coming together, the researchers produced a "built-in" triangulation process. Lastly, an independent observer was asked to review the data collected and to check it against the interpretations generated by the researchers. This audit involved a review of audio tapes, transcribed interviews, and debriefing

session notes. It is intended that through the auditing, member check, and triangulation processes, the interpretations and hypotheses presented in this study are reliably grounded and valid.

## CONTEXT AND DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PHENOMENON

Examination of the demographics of the phenomenon revealed that the local school system did not compile information and statistics concerning this specific group of school employees. Instead, the demographic information available concerning reassigned and rank reduced personnel was imbedded within more general, descriptive statistics that included staff changes such as: requested transfers, seniority transfers, returning personnel (from sabbatical leave), as well as involuntarily reassigned and rank reduced personnel.

All certificated personnel (administrators and teachers) facing involuntary reassignment or requesting reassignment in Greenville Public Schools are placed in a staff reduction pool. The non-renewal of contracts because of program cancellations or cutbacks (unrelated to the evaluation or performance of personnel) is based on seniority. Personnel who experience the non-renewal of their contracts are then considered to be on lay-off status. The contracts of all of the subjects of this study were not renewed because of program cancellations or because of a lack of seniority within programs experiencing cutbacks. In practice, because the non-renewal of contracts must occur prior to April 30 for the following school year, and because positions are vacated between that date and the beginning of the new year, many staff members of the Greenville Public Schools who are notified of non-renewal, are recalled prior to the beginning of the following year. All of the subjects of this study were recalled in order of their seniority as positions became available in their areas of certification. All recalls

occurred between the non-renewal date and the beginning of the new school year.

Between the years 1976-77 and 1983-84, the Greenville Public School System experienced a substantial decline in instructional staff (see Table-1). The staff level decreases exhibited in Table-1 reveal the state of flux the school system has been experiencing since the mid-seventies. These decreases can be traced to two specific occurrences. First, there has been a 29.6% decrease in student enrollment since the 1976-77 school year. Secondly, the outside funding programs that support administrative and special assignment positions within the school system decreased a total of 78.6% between 1976-77 and 1983-84, with some program funds completely disappearing (see Table-2).

Since the 1981-82 school year, figures have been compiled by the Greenville Public Schools on the racial and gender composition of the staff reduction pool at the beginning and end of each year. Figures 1a & 2a illustrate the gender and racial compositions of the staff reduction pool at the beginning of the school years 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84. Figures 1b & 2b illustrate the gender and racial compositions of the entire teaching staff within the Greenville Public Schools for the same years.

The Interviewees. Seven Greenville Public School teachers were interviewed for this study. In order to provide a more complete context for the remainder of the paper, brief biographical sketches of the seven participants are provided here.

> Bradley is a black male in his mid-thirties who is currently teaching physical education at the middle school level in Greenville. Previous to his present assignment, Bradley served as home/school liaison for three years. In his position as liason, he was assigned to a single building, and had responsibility for working with 25-30 students within that particular school. Prior to taking the position as a home/school liaison, Bradley taught physical education at the high school level for nine years. Bradley also served as a summer school principle for six years. He was reassigned to

TABLE - 1

"Greenville" Public Schools - Staff Level Comparisons, 1976-77 - 1983-84*

| | 1976-77 | 1983-84 | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Student Enrollment | 96,571 | 68,000 | 29.6% Decrease |
| Total Staff | 7,588 | 6,853 | 9.7% Decrease |
| Administrators: | | | |
| Schools | 233 | 202 | 13.3% Decrease |
| Central Office | 101 | 93 | 7.7% Decrease |
| TOTAL | 334 | 295 | 11.6% Decrease |
| Teachers: | | | |
| Elementary | 1646 | 1014 | 38.4% Decrease |
| Secondary | 2160 | 1880 | 12.9% Decrease |
| Elem/Sec TOTAL | 3806 | 2894 | 24.0% Decrease |
| Special Education & Vocational Educ. | 672 | 922 | 37.2% Increase |
| TOTAL TEACHERS | 4478 | 3816 | 14.8% Decrease |

* All figures represent full-time-equivalents (F.T.E.). Compiled 10/31/84. Data supplied by "Greenville Public School System".

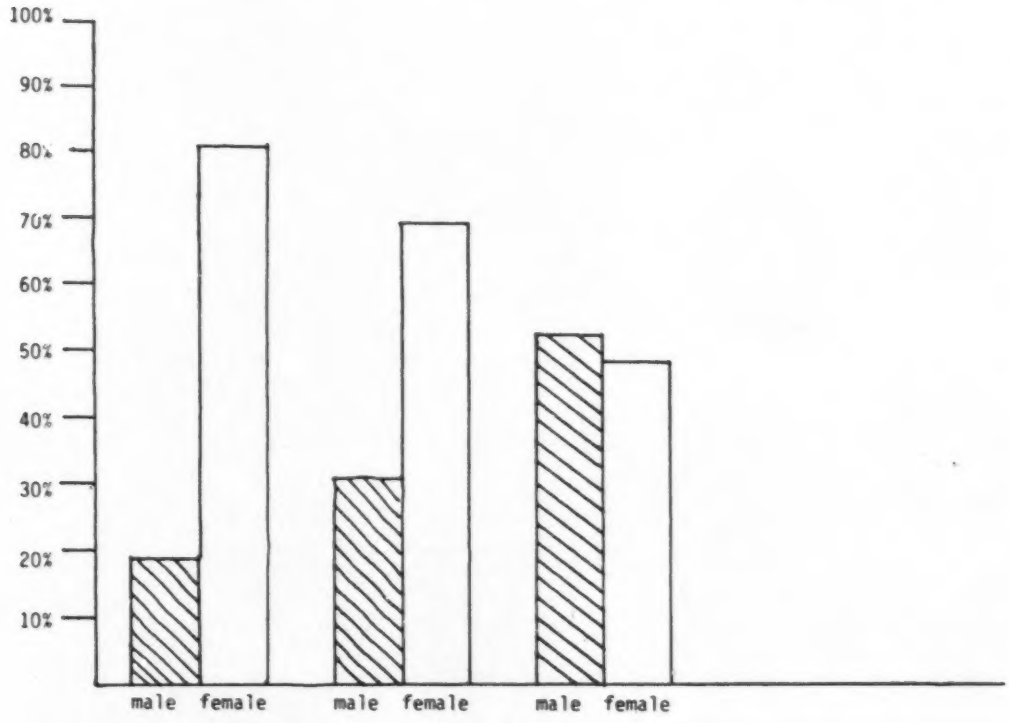
TABLE - 2

"Greenville" Public Schools - Outside Funded Staff 1980-81 - 1983-84*

| | 1980-81 | 1983-84 | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| ESEA I/Chapter 1 Funds | 295 | 0 | 100.0% Decrease |
| Diadvantaged Pupil Fund | 349 | 195 | 44.1% Decrease |
| ESAA Fund | 266 | 0 | 100.0% Decrease |
| TOTAL | 910 | 195 | 78.6% Decrease |

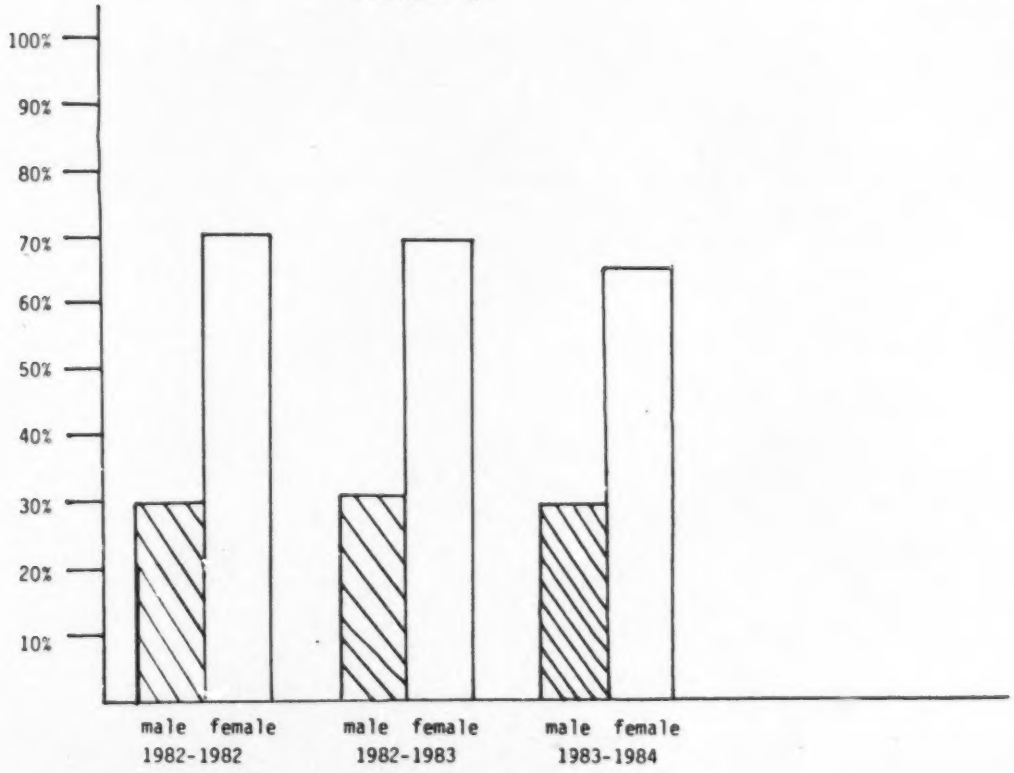
*Categories do not include all sources of outside funding. Compiled 10/31/84. Data supplied by "Greenville Public School System".

FIGURE - 1a



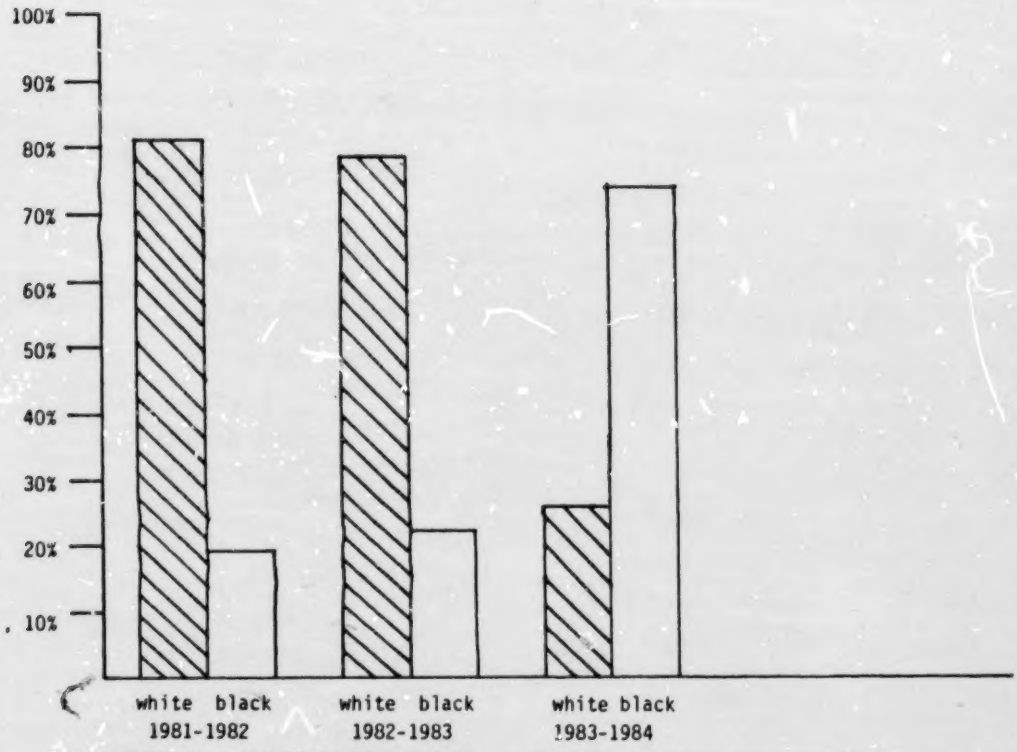

"GREENVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM" - % TEACHERS IN STAFF REDUCTION POOL
(gender breakdown)

FIGURE - 1b



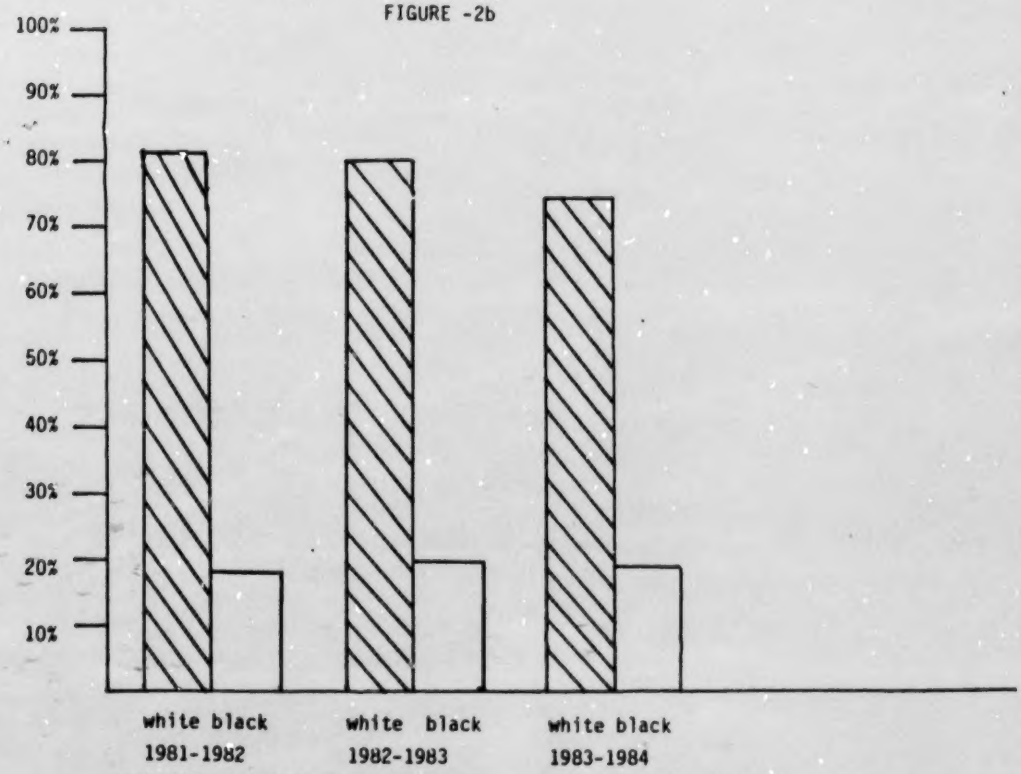

"GREENVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM" - % TEACHERS EMPLOYED
(gender breakdown)

FIGURE - 2a




"GREENVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM" - % TEACHERS IN STAFF REDUCTION POOL
(racial breakdown)

FIGURE -2b




"GREENVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM" - % TEACHERS EMPLOYED
(racial breakdown)

the classroom when funding for the liaison program was decreased.

Fred is a black male in his mid-forties who is presently teaching language arts and social studies at the middle school level. Immediately prior to his reassignment, Fred was working in the school system's personnel office as a recruiter of minority teachers. After teaching for ten years at the elementary and high school levels, Fred worked in quasi-administrative positions, such as vocational coordinator, for eight years.

Ike is a white male in his mid-thirties who taught grades 1 - 6 for ten years before taking a position as a pupil support agent in the school system's desegregation program. Ike worked in the pupil support area and as a liaison between the schools and the community for a total of three years. When federal funding for the school system's desegregation program was cut back, the pupil support and community liaison programs were cancelled, and Ike was reassigned to teach grades 7 and 8 at the middle school level.

Jillian is a black female in her early thirties who is presently teaching home economics at the middle school level. After teaching for seven years at the high school level, Jillian worked in the pupil support program for four years, then as a program evaluation specialist for one year. The evaluation specialist position was the victim of funding cuts, and she was reassigned to the classroom.

Leo is a black male in his early thirties who is presently teaching math and science at the grade 7 and 8 levels at a middle school. Prior to teaching at the middle school level, Leo served as a program evaluation specialist for two years, working on federally funded programs within the Greenville Public School System. Leo had his initial experience in the system as an elementary school teacher for three years. This was followed by three years as a middle school teacher.

Pat is a white female in her mid-forties. She began her career in the school system as a math and science teacher at the elementary, as well as the junior and senior high levels. After teaching for five years, Pat took the position of program coordinator working on in-service training for system teachers. She completed a Ph. D., and after serving as a teacher on special assignment and as a supervisor of teachers, Pat became an evaluation and research specialist for the school system. Her federally funded position was eliminated, and Pat was reassigned to the classroom, after being away from it for fifteen years. She now teaches science at the middle school level.

Terry is a white male in his mid-thirties. He began his teaching career as a junior high school physical education

> teacher. After eight years of teaching (at the same school) Terry took a position as a home/school liaison. After spending two years in the liaison position, Terry became a staff person in the pupil support program for one year. Terry lost his position in the pupil support program when federal desegregation funding was cut back. Upon reassignment to the classroom, Terry found himself back at the school where he initially taught.

The Interview Setting The middle school setting provided the backdrop for all interviews. For the teachers, this meant giving up conference periods, lunch breaks, and time after school. These hours were voluntarily given from the teachers' very busy daily schedules. (Teachers arrive for classes as early as 7:15 a.m., supervise homerooms, hallways, or lunchrooms, and teach six 40 minute periods.) Each teacher has one forty minute conference period. One teacher described her conference period this way,

> It's often consumed with (things like) parent conferences and team meetings. I rarely ever have a conference period where I can sit down and relax. Today, I met with team members about these field trips that are coming up, talked about some other stuff that the eighth grade team has to deal with, and had to talk with the assistant principal about discipline problems. What else? I guess that's all....

On that same day, she talked to the researchers during her lunch period and when time ran out, agreed to meet after school to complete the interview.

On several occasions, the researchers asked interviewees about their willingness to give up "free" time to talk about their circumstances. Part of the answer is apparent in the interviewees' frank responses to questions asked in the interviews. Some interviewees were anxious to share very personal reactions and intense feelings. For example, Pat's reaction to the question of how she felt when she was notified of her reassignment to the classroom after fifteen years in administrative positions was,

> It sounded like ... you know ... It didn't sound like you were being fired exactly; it came across like, we don't need you anymore ... It's hard for anybody who finds herself in that position not to feel that they somehow are personally responsible for what has happened to them. I can think back to 1976, the first time I had to deal with a round of cuts. I myself at that time was not cut, but I was working with a group of teachers who were Title I funded and there was a cut in Title I funding. I remember going up to a teacher and she turned to me and tears started running out of her eyes and she said, 'I don't know what I've done.', and I said to her 'Hey, you didn't do anything.' I have a neighbor that just got his pink slip last week. He does not have a job at the end of this year. He's an excellent teacher. You're supposed to produce and do your work as well as ever (after receiving notification of reassignment or lay-off), but you feel like screaming and saying to hell with the whole thing - I don't care anymore. That's how the guy next door feels and he's going to feel that way for several weeks. He'll be okay. He'll survive, but it's tough.

All of the participants in the study seemed eager to talk about the "trials and tribulations", as well as the benefits of their personal experiences of reassignment and rank reduction. This willingness to share experiences gave the researchers confidence that the participants viewed the interviews as important, and that they were concerned that their responses be truly representative of their thoughts and feelings about the phenomenon of reassignment and rank reduction.

## FINDINGS

Five themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data. These themes were areas of concern addressed by each interviewee. Although these themes were consistent across all interviews, individuals exhibited different responses to these areas of concern. The five themes that emerged from the interviews were labeled as:

1. The Career Building Process
2. The Interim Perspective
3. Problems Encountered by Reassigned Teachers
4. Coping Strategies
5. Perceived Benefits of Non-classroom Experience

Career Building What is it like for a person transferred from an "upper level" position in his or her field to a previously held "entry level" position? Many of the teachers expressed a strong sense of "moving backwards" or losing ground in their careers. The initial move from the classroom was not motivated by a desire to escape the traditional teaching environment, as evidenced by Jillian, "I liked teaching and I didn't get out of it because I didn't like it, I just wanted to move ahead ... and do some of the (other) things I had been trained to do." All of the subjects of this study acknowledged that their main reason for initially leaving the classroom was because they desired both career advancement and the increased influence on the operation of the school system that administrative posts hopefully would allow them to have.

The process of building a career in education by expanding upon classroom teaching experience and branching into administrative and quasi-administrative positions is not novel. Classroom teaching is perceived to be the entry level position in the field. After taking the initial steps of advancement in building a career, such as moving from classroom teaching to a pupil support or community liaison post, reassignment to the entry level position of classroom teaching amounted to a career crisis for many of the interviewees. The poor national economic and employment picture left little chance for lateral transfer into a similar administrative post in other school systems. Chances were also slim for a move to the private business sector for those teachers willing to leave the Greenville School System. This situation left all of the subjects in this study only one option, and that was to accept the positions offered by the school system. The only "option" offered by the school system was reassignment to the classroom.

How did these teachers perceive their careers after reassignment to the

classroom? Jillian left no doubt about the way she felt the reassignment to the classroom had impacted on her own career goals,

> Right now I just feel stifled, because my career has halted. Teaching is not my career. I'm just here ... I had a certain image and I was trying to go into that career role-type. I had been 'the teacher' and I didn't want that anymore. It was stressful because all of a sudden, people would ask 'What is your position this year?' And they would know that I had gone on to school ... I was so happy in that position (evaluation specialist), and all of a sudden to say 'I'm a teacher, <u>again</u>.' It was stressful for me to say that. I have high goals for some type of administrative job even beyond what I've had. I want to pursue something and really get into it.

Six out of the seven teachers interviewed seemed to have the same types of career goals: advancement into administrative positions. Terry was the only respondent satisfied in his current position. The interviewees also tended to measure their degree of success in reaching these career goals by the same type of criteria. The overriding concern of these teachers was that their career advancement lead them to jobs that, (1) presented a challenge, (2) allowed them to take on large tasks, and (3) carried a large amount of responsibility. In their perceptions, classroom teaching was not able to meet these criteria.

With his administrative position cut, Fred was faced with the choice of reassignment to the classroom, or to a previously held quasi-administrative position. He had more options than other teachers, but each option available offered experiences and situations he had already encountered. None of Fred's options would bring him closer to the career goal he desires, which is "to be in a position to bring more quality teachers into the classroom." The return to classroom teaching was a postponement of Fred's career advancement. His reaction upon learning of his reassignment to the classroom was, "I enjoy teaching, but I've had eighteen years of this. I think I've demonstrated that I'm capable of working with young people."

Pat's feeling were similar to Fred's. She had worked for fifteen years in administrative and quasi-administrative jobs with the system. When she was staff reduced from her evaluation position, the reduction decision was made on the basis of her seniority in that particular program. When asked about her career goals and the possibility of returning to an administrative position she replied,

> I made up my mind a long time ago that I'm not interested in being a building principle ever ... Some types of supervisory work I like. I like working with teachers ... working with teachers is not all that different from working with kids although it may be a little harder in some ways and easier in other ways ... I am really not sure I want to ever take another administrative job in Greenville because I'll always be the low person on the cut list. As long as they're going to be cutting there is no way you can get seniority ... you know it is hopeless unless they're going to give you a two or three year contract. As long as you're issued a one year contract, you are up for what happened last year, which is, they just don't renew your contract. You have to go back and be a teacher.

Bradley, Leo and Ike all seemed to have more optimism and confidence about their circumstances than the other teachers in this group. There was also a strong similarity between the backgrounds of these men. All three were in the process of creating other options for themselves. Bradley had experience as a summer school principal and was a successful basketball coach. This gave him two concrete options for the future. He had also returned to school to enhance his credentials as an administrator. Bradley explains his situation,

> If the opportunity presents itself and I can move to the college rank, I would probably make a move there ... or if a possible administrative position arose that I could fill ... I know you've got to go through certain stepping stones to get what you want--that's (the case) in any particular profession. I feel that giving myself a couple ... three more years, that if the opportunity presented itself to go that route (an administrative job), then I would probably go in that direction. I still have a two-pronged approach where I could be in some sort of administrative position in a building or downtown, or fill a coaching position in the college ranks.

Ike and Leo have created other options for themselves by entering doctoral programs at a local university. Ike is working toward a degree in computer science that he would "like to be able to apply to education ... I'm keeping my options open as far as even going outside of education." Leo had been chosen to enter a principal's training program for the school system but the program had been reduced because of a lack of funds. Leo had been working toward a degree in administration, and after losing the principal-training opportunity, he returned to the university on sabbatical leave for one year. While at the university, he worked as a teaching assistant in the college of education. This experience helped to clarify his future career interests. He explained,

> I realized that within the school system the real policy makers are the teachers. Once you close the door, the teachers make their own policy and if you really want to have any kind of impact on what is happening in the classroom, the impact would probably have to come from the pre-service teacher. It kind of got me going in the right direction. I knew I wanted to work with education majors ... and provide experiences that, translated into classroom teaching, would be productive.

Consistent in all of these interviews was the idea that these teachers measured the success of their careers by the amount of responsibility and the size of the task provided by their positions. Schein (1978) has identified three components of a person's "occupational self-concept" that together create what he calls a person's "career anchor".

1. Self-perceived talents and abilities.
2. Self-perceived motives and needs.
3. Self-perceived attitudes and values.

According to Schein the concept "career anchor" describes

> "the pattern of self-perceived talents, motives, and values -- (it) serves to guide, constrain, stabilize, and integrate the person's career ... The career anchor functions in the person's work life as a way of organizing experience, identifying one's area of contribution in the long run, generating criteria for kinds of work settings in which one

> wants to function, and identifying patterns of ambition and criteria for success by which one will measure oneself (Schein, 1978, p.127).

Of the five types of career anchors described by Schein, six of the seven teachers interviewed seemed to correspond to what Schein calls the "managerial competence" anchor. People with the managerial career anchor are described as viewing functional or specific technical jobs, such as teaching, as necessary steps on the road to higher administrative or managerial positions (Schein, p. 135). People with the managerial career anchor perceive that their abilities are the results of competencies in three general areas.

> 1. Analytical competence: the ability to identify, analyze, and solve problems under conditions of incomplete information and uncertainty.
>
> 2. Interpersonal competence: the ability to influence, supervise, lead, manipulate, and control people at all levels of the organization toward the more effective achievement of organizational goals.
>
> 3. Emotional competence: the capacity to be stimulated by emotional and interpersonal crises rather than exhausted or debilitated by them, the capacity to bear high levels of responsibility without becoming paralyzed, and the ability to exercise power without guilt or shame (Schein, pp. 135-136).

Of the seven, Terry alone did not fall into the managerial competence category. Based upon descriptions of his experiences in administrative roles and his experience upon returning to the classroom, Terry seemed to exhibit what Schein describes as the "technical/functional" anchor. Terry summed up his administrative and reassignment experiences in this way,

> Those programs I was in were a complete waste of my time ... I was at the whim of the principal. It was ridiculous. You really weren't tied down, had no direction, never knew what you were supposed to do or when you were supposed to deal with them (job responsibilities) ... I had no trouble adjusting to it (reassignment to the classroom) at all. I'm sure some of the other teachers might have, but I had none because I was very disenchanted with what I was doing.

People anchored in the technical/functional competence category "have

oriented their careers around their areas of competence and have explicitly avoided situations which would remove them from those areas or push them into general management." (Schein, 1978, p.134) This would seem to accurately describe Terry's circumstances, especially the situations surrounding his initial move out of the classroom. As he describes that situation,

> I started my year here (at the middle school where he was eventually reassigned) in physical education. Our school was assigned two home/school/community agents from the high school. They would alternate days over here. Around November of that school year one of the home/school/community agents moved into the principal training program ... My principal came to me and asked me if I would be interested in stepping into the home/school/community agent position and I said 'yeah', because this place was getting very small after eight years.

Terry had not actively sought to leave the classroom. The opportunity opened up, and he suddenly found himself in a quasi-administrative job. It is interesting to compare Terry's description of his job with Bradley's description of the same position,

> ...since the job has a very nebulous area, you've got to be self-motivated because you do have a certain number of students that you are working with, but since there are no guidelines on exactly what you do with each particular student, you've got to be able to fill out each one of those entities and work with them in that particular area and also have time to do other things as well. So therefore, if you see another particular need in the building that you can address yourself to, it takes a little bit of initiative to activate that ... I was not confined to just one component of that school environment. I had flexibility.

This difference in the reaction to the same job might be explained by the fact that Bradley and Terry had two very different career anchors. Schein contrasts these two career anchors in this way,

> ... Those who were classified as being anchored in managerial competence differ most clearly from those anchored in technical/functional competence in being less wedded to a given area of work than to the concept of responsibility and management per se. These two groups of people are seeking very different kinds of career goals and measure their degree of success by very different criteria. Whereas the

> technical/functional person is concerned about the content of the work, the managerial person is much more concerned about the size of the task, the degree of the challenge, and amount of responsibility. Managerially anchored people are in what Driver calls 'linear careers' as contrasted with 'steady state' careers ... Organizations need both managerially oriented and technically/functionally oriented people, but they probably have to be managed quite differently ... (1978, p.145)

The notion of career building then, based on the theory of career anchors, provides a broad base from which to analyze the impact of rank reduction and reassignment on teachers. Each individual is different, but as outlined above, there are major similarities between individuals with common career anchors.

Interim Perspective The interim perspective consists of the attitude that each interviewee has adapted towards this period of career halt. All of the teachers expressed concern that they not remain in a classroom teaching position for the remainder of their careers in education. With the exception of Terry, the teachers voiced an "urgent" desire to return to the position held before reassignment (or an equivalent position). Fred expressed it this way, "I like challenges, and I'm not challenged ... I'll stay for another year (in the classroom), and if things don't develop like I want them to, I'll leave the system and try something else."

Two consistencies were evident throughout all the interviews: (1) reassigned teachers did not feel that classroom teaching could give them the career satisfaction they desired, and (2) reassigned teachers did not desire or expect to remain in classroom teaching positions beyond one or two years. In regard to the latter, the teachers described a variety of alternatives to remaining in the classroom. These alternatives ranged from a sincere hope that a renewed economy would bring new sources of funding to the school system therefore creating a new need for administrators, to the hope that employment

outside the field of education could be found upon the completion of doctoral work in areas such as computer science and administration.

Douglas T. Hall (1971) has developed a model of inquiry into career development that is useful in analyzing the reasons behind the interim perspectives exhibited by reassigned teachers in regard to their new positions as classroom teachers. The basic assumption of Hall's model is

> ... that an individual strives to increase his sense of self-esteem. One important means of achieving a high level of self-esteem is through the development of a competent self-identity, or an identity containing a sense of personal competence. As one comes to see himself as a person who can effectively act upon his environment, he values himself more as a total person, or, put another way, he experiences increased self-esteem.

Hall describes the basic process through which this sense of personal success or competent self-identity is developed as a five stage process. If the individual sets a challenging goal for him/herself and then through independent effort attains that goal, the person will experience psychological success. The sense of psychological success will lead to increased self-esteem and therefore a more competent identity. The following figure illustrates this process.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Choice of Challenging Goal | -> Independent Effort | -> Goal Attainment | -> Psychological Success | -> Increased Self-Esteem |

Hall further posits that the individual's need for a competent identity leads him/her to seek out situations where self-esteem will be enhanced, and to avoid situations where self-esteem will be reduced. He continues by pointing out that an individual's response to his/her present situation is a function of his/her present level of self-esteem. Schein's notion of career anchors in conjunction with Hall's description of the development of personal self-identity can provide insight into the interim perspective taken by these reassigned and rank reduced teachers. The reassignment and concurrent

reduction in rank have interrupted the pattern of career success and suspended the further development of competencies these teachers were obtaining in administrative positions. The return to the classroom placed these teachers in a situation that failed to offer them a chance for continued personal success and development of competencies as defined by these managerial career anchored teachers. Jillian described the suspension of this pattern of career success as very frustrating,

> I had a certain image and I was trying to go into that career role-type. I had been 'the teacher' and I didn't want that anymore. It was stressful because all of a sudden people would ask, 'What is your position this year?' And they would know that I have gone on to school ... I was so happy in that (administrative) position, and all of a sudden to say, 'I'm a teacher again!' It was stressful for me just to say that ... I have high goals for some type of administrative job even beyond what I've had. Other jobs have been specialist positions and I hope to (eventually) get into supervision. I want to pursue something and really get into it ... I have high hopes just like a lot of people.

While Jillian's reassignment to the classroom was frustrating for her, Terry's return resulted in a strong sense of satisfaction for him.

> ... It's fun. It's enjoyable; it is a nice change ... The whole thing seems so much easier, especially after being out at the high school working with the quote 'bad kids' ... it's kind of a break to come back here to tell you the truth -- to finally get some directions from somebody -- knowing what you're supposed to be doing and not having someone look over your shoulder.

The criteria each teacher uses in measuring career satisfaction has a direct relationship to the type of career anchor they possess. As shown above, Jillian and Terry apply different criteria in measuring career success. In addition to Schein's career anchor notion, Hall's theory of career development explains how career satisfaction is achieved by individuals,

> Even though the person may see himself as being completely capable of dealing with the demands of his career role, he may at the same time be completely dissatisfied with his career. One reason for this dissatisfaction could be that he may not value the subidentity (that aspect of the total identity which

> is engaged when a person is behaving in a given role) which he must use to work in that role. A second possibility is that the person could aspire to develop his capabilities even further in his career area, beyond what is presently expected of him.

Over the course of their careers, these teachers had increased their knowledge bases and abilities while expanding their realms of experience. This continued career growth pattern was interrupted by reassignment to the classroom. Hall describes career growth as a process of personal development in which the person becomes more ego-involved in his/her career work. Hall's theory of career development is described as a spiraling combination of career choices, growth, and commitment. According to Hall,

> As the person sees himself becoming more (or less) competent and successful in an area he has chosen, his satisfaction will increase (or decrease) his commitment to that area, and he will then choose to do more (or less) work in that area, and so on.

For all the teachers interviewed (with the exception of Terry) the return to the classroom meant a suspension of career growth and success. This resulted in a perspective that the return to the classroom would be short-lived. The classroom represented a dead end, as far as the further expansion of knowledge, competencies, and experiences beyond the classroom were concerned. As expected, the teachers possessing a managerial career anchor applied criteria such as: size of the task, degree of challenge, and amount of responsibility as the measures of career success and career satisfaction. For technical/functional anchored teachers, such as Terry, the criteria for career success and satisfaction were directly linked to the content of the work required of his position. Terry was the lone teacher who had not experienced a feeling of expanding competence in his administrative position, therefore, he was happy to return to a position where he <u>had</u> experienced competence and satisfaction--classroom teaching.

Problems Encountered by Reassigned Teachers The previous job experiences of the teachers interviewed seemed to play an important role in how they perceived of themselves as educators and in what they perceived as problems upon returning to the classroom. Previous experiences had allowed the interviewees to expand their self-identity (as described in the previous section), and to see their role in the school system as being more encompassing than the role of classroom teacher allowed. These circumstances led most reassigned teachers to view their return to the classroom with some apprehension. Leo describes how he felt about the reassignment,

> I just felt very, very bad about what I was doing. Then in addition to that I have this thing in my mind that I've had university training (at this point, three years in a Ph.D. program), so why don't they utilize my skills? The other thing was that I had participated in the cadet class (principal intern program) and I thought I was supposed to be an administrator or quasi-administrator ... All these things were playing on me.

If, as Hall has stated, "an individual's work is often the major input to (one's) total self identity" (1971, p.56), then it is understandable that reassigned teachers expressed apprehension about their reassigned and rank reduced status.

The problems encountered by these reassigned teachers can be categorized into four groups:

1. Competence as a classroom teacher.
2. Relations with building staff.
3. Feelings of being confined to the classroom.
4. Individual concerns.

The concern expressed most often by the interviewees was the problem of a lack of competence and confidence in regard to their classroom teaching abilities. Suddenly, after many year of feeling confident and competent in their careers, these teachers perceive a professional crisis. Pat laments, "I feel like a beginning teacher this year. I suppose that the concerns of any

beginning teacher are lesson plans, not only plans for what do to today and this week, but how to get through the whole year. How do you get the whole thing laid out and fit it all in?" On this same issue, Leo states, "My concern was almost exclusively with myself; how will I survive? When I left (classroom teaching), my interest centered around my ability to get the student to do certain things. When I came back, my concern was: Did I have the skills to survive?" Further, Jillian posits that additional pressure is placed upon reassigned and rank reduced teachers to be extremely competent in the classroom "because if you're not doing your very best, people are watching you. When you're getting ready to interview for another position, your last position was just 'teacher', and you are really put on the spot." The reassigned teachers' concern regarding their competence as classroom teachers was poignantly described by Pat,

> My gosh, all these years I have been running around telling other people how to teach their classes, can I do it myself? Can I keep the lid on? Can I keep those kids in their seats doing their work? What kind of a classroom teacher can I be now? When you're a beginning teacher, everybody knows it's okay if you don't know. It's not okay when you're an administrator coming to the classroom not to know, is it?

In many ways, these teachers expressed concerns that very closely resemble Fuller and Bown's (1975) first stage in the process of becoming a teacher--the survival stage. Traditionally, this stage is thought of as occurring in preservice or early in the teaching career of the inservice teacher. Here, as was the case with the teachers interviewed in this study, the concern centers around classroom control, mastery of content, and evaluation by supervisors. For this group of teachers, the experience was a traumatic shift in their professional self-image. "I know I'm a good teacher," Leo declares, "but, I didn't do a very good job initially. I felt really out of it and it showed in my teaching. After the first couple of

weeks I began to accept some things."

This adjustment period appears to be short-lived for most of these teachers, however, because of the tremendous amount of time they have spent over the years developing materials, finding resources, and creating successful management strategies. As Pat states, "Next year, I can be a pretty decent teacher; this year it's questionable. (She laughs.) I mean, I've gone through the motions. I thinks some of the kids have learned something, but there have been a lot of problems this year. It'll be so much easier next year."

The second problem was the fear that their teaching colleagues viewed them differently. The teachers felt that their colleagues' views had developed because of the positions once held by the reassigned teachers, and what they call the "baggage" brought with them from their other positions within the school system. As Pat points out,

> There's really no way you can stop being what you were in the past. I brought 'baggage', but I try to keep it hidden. I mean, quite frankly, what's to be gained if I do otherwise? I tried very hard to be a teacher, to be part of the staff. My teammates would tell you that I think differently than other teachers think. I'll give you an example. Earlier on, I got into it because they (the other teachers) made some comment about 'those people downtown'. I find myself sticking up for the (school) system.

The principals seem to view reassigned and rank reduced teachers differently. As Jillian notes, "I think he (the principal) looks at me differently because I am interested in administrative work." Pat confirms this experience of being perceived as different from other teachers, "He (the principal) asks me to do things that he wouldn't ask other members of the staff to do. He's aware of some of the things I know how to do, and sometimes he expects me to help out, for example, in proposal writing."

A third problem described by the interviewees was the sense of having to adjust to the confinement of the classroom and/or to the "tight" schedules of middle school teachers. Jillian says, "You don't know what's going on the outside world until school's over. My other jobs enabled me to move around." Similarly, Pat queries, "Do you think I had time to go to the bathroom, or get a cup of coffee this morning? No, I've had four classes of kids go through here today." Several teachers mentioned the difficulty of adjusting to the time constraints of classroom teaching again. Bradley said, "Everything is regimented on a forty-two minute time frame. It took me about half a year to adjust to the rigid schedule." All of the interviewees talked of the sense of always being "on", of never having time to relax. "There's never a time, when you're a classroom teacher, that you're not going to be missed. There's never a time when you don't have forty eyes looking at you," according to Pat.

Besides problems that fit into the three broad categories, some interviewees expressed individual concerns. Bradley decried large class sizes and how this situation prohibits teachers from providing individual attention to students. For Jillian, the students' lack of respect, motivation, and responsibility added to her stress. Ike defined the move to the classroom as the loss of the ability to exercise leadership in problem situations broader than those experienced by the classroom teacher. These can be viewed as problems by individual respondents according to their particular personalities and the peculiarities of the contexts they faced. As if these adjustments were not enough, many of these teachers took salary cuts in their return to the classroom. Pat speaks for these teachers, "I took a salary cut to

come out here and be a classroom teacher working my tail off. Sure, it bothers me. How could it not?"

All of the teachers interviewed did not experience all four categories of problems described above. For some teachers, the reassignment presented few problems beyond what as been labeled as individual concerns. Other teachers experienced considerable problems, including all four of the categories explained above. The source of the differences of perception regarding problems faced upon returning to the classroom may be illuminated by returning to the career development theory developed by Hall (1971) and Schein's (1978) notion of career anchors. Those teachers who adjusted to the reassignment to the classroom with a minimum of problems included Terry, Bradley, and Ike. Terry's ability to easily adjust to the return to the classroom can be viewed as a result of the fact that his career anchor (technical/functional) is more congruent with the position of classroom teacher than that of the administrative positions he had previously held. Why Bradley and Ike experienced few adjustment problems can be explained as the result of how they coped with the situation. (See the following section.)

For the rest of the interviewees, the problems experienced in their reassignment to the classroom may be seen as the result of a conflict between what Hall labels a person's career role (the behaviors, expectations, and attributes associated with a person's work, i.e. classroom teaching) and a person's career subidentity (a cluster of all the attributes manifested by a person). These teachers desired career advancement, which meant leaving the classroom for administrative or quasi-administrative positions within the school system. Career

advancement resulted in an extension of their subidentities, as they experienced success in their new roles. That is, as these teachers moved into administrative positions and were successful, they developed new competencies, and increased their knowledge, abilities, and motivation related to their new roles. Reassignment to the classroom resulted in a conflict between career role and career subidentity for this group of teachers.

Hall uses the term "career adjustment" to describe the relationship between the career role and the career subidentity. "High career adjustment means that there is little or no conflict between the person's career subidentity and his career role. Career satisfaction is the extent to which the person values this career adjustment" (1971, p.53). The career role of classroom teacher was much more narrow than the career subidentity many of the teachers had developed as a result of their experiences outside of the classroom. As classroom teachers they were not allowed to fully use the skills they had developed, and their career growth was stunted. For Leo, Fred, Pat, and Jillian the conflict between career role and career subidentity seemed to be the most severe. They expressed dissatisfaction with their current position, as well as a sense that their talents and skills were being wasted by the organization.

The notion of career role and career subidentity being in conflict can help us to better understand the source of many of the problems experienced by reassigned and rank reduced teachers. Hall's theory of career development on the notions of psychological success, career role, and career growth have also been used to illuminate the interim perspective taken by many of the reassigned and rank reduced teachers.

Coping Strategies The process of reassignment and rank reduction created major changes in the lives and careers of the interviewees. They had to give up jobs in which they had been successful and return to a position that they did not desire. For some, the adjustment to a new working environment, with new job responsibilities, was a smooth process. For others, the loss of career advancement, the cut in salary, and the loss of responsibility created a very stressful situation. It has been described in previous sections that almost all of the interviewees desired to work in an administrative capacity, and that they perceived of the "second round" in the classroom as one that would be short-lived. This section will examine how these teachers coped with the psychological and professional problems encountered as a result of reassignment and rank reduction to the classroom.

Throughout the interview, many coping tactics were described by the teachers. These ranged from the belief that in the next year an administrative position would be found, to a renewed interest in coaching athletic teams, or even to the possibility of leaving the field of education completely. Although many other specific tactics were used in coping with the changes and problems encountered upon reassignment to the classroom, one or both of two major coping mechanisms was used by all of the teachers: 1) An expanded or intensified involvement in professional activities, 2) A search for professional support from others, specifically other teachers.

Folkman and Lazarus (1980) have conceptualized coping within the cognitive-phenomenological theory of psychological stress. The framework of this theory is transactional "in that the person and the environment are seen in an ongoing relationship of reciprocal action, each affecting and in turn being affected by the other" (1980, p.23). Lazarus has defined two processes that interact in this reciprocal relationship: appraisal and coping.

The first process, "appraisal", involves the evaluation of events that occur in a person's experience, according to what is at stake, and what options are available for that person. There are three types of stressful appraisals: a) harm-loss, which refers to the damage that has occurred, b) threat, which refers to an anticipated harm or loss that has not, as yet, occurred, and c) challenge, which refers to anticipated opportunities for mastery or gain.

What a person actually thinks and does in an episode or series of episodes, to change these appraised conditions results in the second process--coping. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) define coping as

> "the cognitive and behavioral efforts made to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among them. Such coping efforts serve two main functions: the management or alteration of the person-environment relationship that is the source of stress (problem-focused coping), and the regulation of stressful emotions (emotion-focused coping)." (p.23)

Coping, therefore, in this paper, will refer to a complex, reflective process involving both the individual's appraisal (harm/loss, threat, challenge) of the event, and the coping mechanisms (problem-focused, emotion-focused) employed to master, tolerate, or reduce the stressful environment.

Using the Folkman and Lazarus framework the two major coping mechanisms used by reassigned teachers in this study could be classified this way:

1. An expanded or intensified involvement in professional activities. -> Problem-focused coping
2. A search for professional support from others, specifically other teachers. -> Emotion-focused coping

The two coping mechanisms above are generalizations based on information obtained from the interviews. Some of the interviewees emphasized the use of only one of the coping mechanisms, while others relied on both.

The first of these two coping mechanisms can be vividly illustrated with the cases of Ike, Leo, Jillian, and Bradley. The coping mechanism emphasized by these interviewees was expanded involvement in professional activities (a problem-focused mechanism). Ike, Leo, and Jillian were all very involved in continuing their education at a local university. Ike and Leo were both involved in doctoral programs (computer science and educational administration, respectively). Leo also teaches evenings at a local junior college. Both Leo and Ike felt that their graduate school training would provide new options if the Greenville Public School System was unable to move them back into an administrative track in the near future.

Jillian's involvement in professional activities goes beyond graduate course work. Within the school, she seeks special duties such as planning workshops and sharing her expertise and experience with other staff members. Jillian also is extensively involved in professional activities outside of the school. She explains,

> I do try to involve myself in many activities while I am teaching, besides staying in school. If I was just teaching now, and not doing anything else, it would be really bad for me. It's (keeping active) the only way I'm keeping my sanity. Going to class at 'Greenville University' in the evenings, involving myself in professional organizations and the 'Greenville Leadership Program', which is community oriented, and doing volunteer work is keeping me so that I'm not confined, you know, (so that) all of a sudden everyone (doesn't) wonder where is Jillian? ... The key to not being depressed, and staying that way, is to constantly be aggressive, and think of I can do to keep moving.

Bradley's problem-focused coping approach included the option of returning to a previous involvement in business, as well as another option outside of classroom teaching.

> Since I'm very active in coaching--and I love the sport dearly--I'm coaching basketball.If the opportunity presents itself, and I can move to the college ranks ... I would move ... I still have a two-pronged approach where I could be in some sort of administrative position or I could be coaching in

the college ranks.

The second coping mechanism frequently used by reassigned teachers is to seek professional support from other people, especially other teachers (an emotion-focused mechanism). Leo "felt badly" about how he was doing in the classroom after being reassigned, yet he was apprehensive about asking other teachers for help. He imagined that they would say, "How is he going to be able to run a school if he's having problems in the classroom?" Leo was not defeated. He explains,

> I have made up my mind that I am going to change. First, I'm not going to let these turkeys win; I am not going to walk out of here as a failure. Secondly, I know that I'm a better teacher than what I've shown so far, and I'm going to show it ... I began to seek help where help was needed. I began to talk to my wife more about my feelings. Luckily, my wife had been in the classroom and she's a very good teacher ... she offered a great deal of help and support.

Leo reached out to other teacher friends, both outside and inside his own building. This helped him not only with problems such as motivating students, setting standards, and planning activities, but more importantly, with understanding that the problems he experienced were not uniquely his. One newly transferred teacher in his building

> provided almost a mirror for me to look into and it helped. When she first told me about concerns or problems that she had had and ... about some things that she was doing with her class, I was thinking, 'You shouldn't do that.' Then I started wondering if I was doing the same thing. And I was. Because of just talking to her, I began to work out some problems, and I think at the end, she began to iron some things out, too.

Relationships with the new school staff were important sources of professional support for Jillian, Pat, and Terry. Jillian was given a choice of schools upon reassignment to the classroom and she made her decision after careful consideration of the teaching environment, the teaching staff, and the principal. Upon returning to the classroom, Pat

felt threatened by the organization and content of new courses, as well as the possibility of failing as a teacher. To help, she selectively sought out other teachers on staff to, as she says, "bounce ideas off of". "I tried very hard to be a teacher, to be part of the staff," she relates. Her previous position distanced her physically and psychologically from people at the building level, consequently, she had feelings of loneliness and isolation. She views her return to the building staff as a challenge to gain acceptance, familiarity, and a sense of belonging. She says,

> I'm just as much a part of this staff as any other teacher. I kind of like that. I get to wear a little red badge like everyone else around here. It says 'faculty' on it. I'm not somebody who walks in off the street to help some teacher.

Terry found himself reassigned to the same school he left several years earlier. It was not by coincidence that this happened, because like Jillian, he was given a choice between four teaching positions. He says, "Of course, I picked this school, because this is where I started, and I knew a lot of the staff was still here. I knew the new principal here was very, very stern and very tough; he ran a good building. So I chose this position".

In summary, two major coping mechanisms were utilized by reassigned teachers: 1) An expanded or intensified involvement in professional activities; and 2) A search for professional support from others, specifically other teachers. Most reassigned and rank reduced teachers seem to desire a greater amount of responsibility and professional involvement than classroom teaching is perceived to give them. After working at the administrative level and desiring to continue to work at a "managerial" level of responsibility, many of the teachers rerouted their energies to a broader range of activities than typically expected

of classroom teachers. Receiving professional and emotional support from teaching colleagues seemed to be the other major way reassigned teachers coped. This seemed to be especially important when reassigned teachers were able to talk with other teachers facing the same problems in their classrooms.

Perceived Benefits of Non-classroom Experience All interviewees reported that their out-of-classroom experiences benefited them as classroom teachers in a number of ways. Obviously, since these teachers had various outside-of-classroom experiences the benefits they cited were not exactly alike. The common thread that was evident in all interviews was that these teachers felt that they now had a greater awareness and understanding of the broader schooling experience. These reassigned teachers shared a broader view of the issues, problems, and concerns of schooling as a result of their experiences outside of the classroom. The broader view of schooling and education shared by the reassigned teachers was described as an advantage for classroom teachers in three ways: 1) It gave them an expanded understanding of how the educational system can and does operate at the system level; 2) Experience in numerous schools, classrooms, and other non-traditional educational settings gave them new ideas and perspectives on teaching; and 3) It gave them a new perspective on the particulars experienced in the lifeworld of the classroom teacher and/or a deeper appreciation of problems with which children cope daily.

Regular classroom teachers may hold rather myopic views about the operation of the school at the building level, let alone of the school system as a working organization. Often, as Ike says, "The office tends to be a nebulous outer world, and you don't realize what happens there."

Pat reflects, "The school experiences I've had outside the classroom have enabled me to look at an overall picture. I'm probably not as quick to react with a blanket statement. Classroom teachers tend to look at people who are not in the classroom as if they have no idea of what is going on, and that's not exactly fair." Her expanded view of how the school system operates serves her now when she needs something from the system. She cites an example,

> I called up the health supervisor, and I said 'I'm so and so, and I'm over here at Concorde Middle (School), and I need this, and you're supposed to be providing it; that's your job.' If they know me, they know that I know they're supposed to be providing it. More teachers ought to make demands on this system. It's so big it's easy to get lost in the shuffle. A lot of teachers don't know what they could get if they knew who to ask.

On the other hand, this broader co-opted view of the system may in fact prove to be problematic when action is perceived to be needed. Pat alludes to this in a general way, but Bradley frames it with a specific problem he sees that needs to be addressed, "I would like to improve the student-teacher ratio, which is something that is beyond my hands. And, I understand because I have been an administrator. I understand why the classes are large, and therefore it gives me an opportunity not to complain as much." What we may see indicated here is a tendency on the part of these teachers to take a conservative stance supporting the status quo in teacher issues. This type of position could create a problem in relations with teacher colleagues who are less concerned about problems administrators may be facing.

These teachers also relate a number of outside classroom experiences that contribute positively to the stimulation of new ideas and understandings for their current classroom teaching. Pat speculates that, "A person who's returned to the classroom may do a better job than someone who's been there all along, because they (the long-term classroom teacher) may be in a rut."

This, she feels, results from her own searching out, reading, and planning based on the current curriculum guides. "I probably know more about what's in those books than some other people who've been in the classroom all along," she adds. For Ike, changing assignments every two or three years helps him gain a different perspective through different experiences that in turn help him grow as an educator. Bradley feels that through his experiences as both teacher and administrator, he now understands both perspectives better, and is able to have better classroom management as a result.

All teachers, however, report that though being staff-reduced was difficult to deal with in various ways, it could be viewed positively in terms of achieving a better and more current look at the problems classroom teachers face. For Fred, this meant, "waking up to severe problems that children (today) have," and presumably, teachers face. He feels, as well, that "there needs to be a change in the educational strategy we're using." (He does not offer any suggestions in this area.) Not only do the problems children experience become more clearly focused, but as all of those involved in the home/school/community program report, they have developed a new empathy for children given the home environments some children face. As Terry says, "You understand now why some of the kids behave the way they do, because ... when you make home visits and see some of the places they come from and talk to some of the people responsible for them, you understand." Though there is a better understanding of children's backgrounds, and undoubtedly some empathy for them, there was reportedly little time to become involved with children and investigate problems that may be the result of their home environment, other than making an occasional phone call. All felt this was inadequate, but realistic, given the constraints of full time teaching.

Finally, Pat speculates about the possible benefits of a more flexible

organizational structure that would permit exchanges of jobs within the school system, "It might be worthwhile if 'downtown people' could somehow arrange to spend some time in the classroom and do some planning, dealing with kids, and dealing with parents. Looking at it that way, I could go back and work in some downtown job and be a better 'downtown person' because I've been here." Though she talks in terms of downtown people and classroom teachers, presumably what she suggests could be more broadly applicable. Thus, administrators could be involved in teaching and teachers involved in some level of administration. Through these reciprocal arrangements, Pat believes each group might come to understand and appreciate the other's job, and so become better at the job they now perform.

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing interview data collected from several reassigned and rank reduced teachers, five themes emerged. These themes were areas of concern addressed by each interviewee. First, the way in which teachers perceive their careers in education was analyzed in regard to Schein's (1978) notion of career anchors. Six of the seven interviewees were identified as having "managerial competence" career anchors, meaning that they perceived their talents to be best suited for jobs that involved tasks that were of large scope, duties that were challenging, and tasks that involved large amounts of responsibility.

The second theme, the interim perspective, linked Schein's notion of career anchors with Hall's (1971) model of career development in the analysis of reassigned and rank reduced teachers' perceptions of their present position--classroom teacher. Most of the interviewees (six of seven) perceived their reassignment to classroom teaching as only a temporary

circumstance. According to Hall's career development model, this interim perspective would most likely be the result of the inadequacy of classroom teaching in providing a situation where individual teachers' self-esteem would be enhanced.

All reassigned and rank reduced teachers did not experience problems as a result of reassignment. Those teachers who experienced few problems seem to be teachers with options available to them outside the field of education. For teachers encountering difficulties as a result of reassignment and rank reduction, four problem areas were identified: 1) competence as a classroom teacher, 2) relations with building staff, 3) feelings of being confined to the classroom, and 4) individual concerns. The source of the problems encountered by these teachers was analyzed in terms of Hall's career development model. In Hall's terminology, conflict existed between the career role and the career subidentity for most of the teachers. In this case the expectations of the job (classroom teaching) were much narrower than the teachers' self-perceived talents and motives. The most frequent problem area identified was competence as a classroom teacher. Here, many reassigned teachers described their initial situation as analogous to that of a beginning teacher.

Two general coping mechanisms were identified as responses to the reassignment and rank reduction. These coping mechanisms were, 1) An expanded or intensified involvement in professional activities, and 2) A search for professional support from others, specifically other teachers. Coping was defined within the framework presented by Folkman and Lazarus (1980), as part of the cognitive-phenomenological theory of psychological stress. Within this framework the two coping mechanisms above were labeled as, 1) problem-focused coping and 2) emotion-focused coping, respectively.

Finally, all of the interviewees believed that their non-classroom experiences within the school system benefited them upon their return to the classroom. These benefits were generally described within the context of a broader perspective on schooling. This broader perspective was described as a benefit in three ways: 1) It gave them an expanded understanding of how the educational system operated; 2) Experience in numerous schools, classrooms, and other non-traditional education setting gave them new ideas and perspectives on teaching; and 3) It gave them a new perspective on the particulars experienced in the lifeworld of the classroom teacher and/or a deeper appreciation of problems with which children cope daily.

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